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Key Found In Hughes' Will Search

LOS ANGELES, April 27 (UPI)—Those in quest of the will of Howard Hughes reportedly have found an important clue — a key to a safety-deposit box. Now all they have to find is the bank that holds the box that matches up with the key.

The quest for the proper bank is part of an "exhaustive worldwide search" for the dead billionaire's will, described to a superior court judge Monday by a cousin of Hughes. The search extends even to the hangars where Hughes kept planes in his flying days decades ago, the court was told.

No sign of the will has been found, despite assurances by former Hughes employees—including those who remember typing, seeing or handling wills—that he made at least one will, perhaps more, with changes over the years.

The key was found in an office used by Hughes long ago and kept locked for years until his death, The Los Angeles Times reported today.

"Sources close to the Hughes empire" told The Times the mysterious key was discovered in an office in the Hollywood "message center" that was the communications hub of the Hughes empire.

"Many copies of the unidentified safety-deposit box key have been made and are being circulated widely to banks in several states," The Times reported.

The cousin, Richard C. Gano Jr., appeared in superior court Monday to try to block a move by the Los Angeles County public administrator, Bruce Altman, to take control of Hughes' California holdings.

Gano argued that Altman's efforts are hindering the work of a "will search organization" set up by Hughes' survivors, the Summa Corp., and other Hughes business interests, with the help of Hughes' longtime personal and business associates.

"An exhaustive worldwide search of buildings, record storage areas, file rooms, vaults, aircraft hangars and other possible locations is continuing," Gano said, but the hunt is saddled with an "enormous volume of records and other property."